

**Hearing of
House Resources Committee
Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans
on
the National Sea Grant College Program
November 8, 2001**

Members Attending

Rep. Wayne Gilchrest (R-MD-Chair); Del. Robert Underwood (D-Guam-Ranking Member); Del. Eni. F.H. Faleomavaega (D-American Samoa); Rep. Frank Pallone (D-NJ)

Witness List

Dr. David Evans, Assistant Administrator for NOAA Research

Dr. Geraldine Knatz, Chair, Sea Grant Review Panel

Ms. Penelope Dalton, Vice President, Consortium for Oceanographic Research and Education

Dr. Robert Richmond, Professor of Marine Biology, Marine Laboratory, University of Guam

Mr. Richard DeVoe, President, Sea Grant Association

Opening Statements

Chairman Gilchrest noted that the National Sea Grant College Program is a marine research, education and outreach partnership between the federal government and 30 “Sea Grant Colleges,” a program modeled after the Land Grant college system, but receiving only a small fraction of the federal funding that Land Grant colleges receive. He noted that Sea Grant supports research on the conservation and development of coastal and marine resources and conducts essential outreach activities which bring the research results to various marine user groups.

Mr. Underwood said that while Sea Grant has yet to catch the attention of public or Congress in the way land grant college system has, it is nevertheless an important program. He expressed his hope that Sea Grant could be expanded to include a Guam/Micronesian program. He stated that both of the Sea Grant reauthorization bills the Subcommittee was considering called for a substantial, but justified increase in the program’s authorized funding.

Mr. Faleomavaega noted that he has 50 cosponsors on his Sea Grant reauthorization bill, HR 1071 and said he looks forward to more bipartisan support and expressed his hope that the Pacific territories will be included in the Sea Grant program soon.

Testimony (from NOAA witness only)

Dr. Evans began his testimony by noting that the Administration has not yet conducted a formal review of the two proposed Sea Grant reauthorization bills, but that he looked forward to working with Congress on reauthorization legislation that would be consistent with the President’s budgetary and policy goals. Evans outlined the history and organization of the Sea Grant program and referenced recent management reforms to the program that were initiated by the current Sea Grant director, Dr. Ron Baird. He also provided many examples of recent Sea Grant accomplishments in the areas of aquaculture, aquatic nuisance species, coastal hazards, commercial

fisheries, marine education, biotechnology and seafood safety and quality. Dr. Evans concluded his testimony by noting that “NOAA’s National Sea Grant College Program focuses on sustainable development of the Nation’s coastal resources through an organization that is national in scope, university based, and committed to the transfer of research results to coastal and marine user groups.”

Questions (asked to Evans only and condensed)

Chairman Gilchrest asked: Dr. Richmond from Univ. of Guam recommends the creation of a Sea Grant Consortium for Guam/Micronesia, could you comment on that? Is authorization legislation needed to create it?

–**Evans said:** Yes, we have been working with Dr. Richmond and University of Guam officials for a little over two years providing technical assistance and some grant money to begin developing Sea Grant program capability in the region. So we’re taking steps in that direction. It takes a long time to develop a Sea Grant program and they usually begin with extension efforts, which is our recommendation here. I don’t think legislation is needed, we can do it with existing mechanisms.

Mr. Underwood asked: The bills before us today would increase authorization levels for Sea Grant—how can we get more funding to Sea Grant when the Administration has not even requested the maximum amount currently authorized?

–**Dr. Evans replied:** Recently, the Administration has requested funding for Sea Grant that was at or above the prior year’s appropriation for the program, so I think Sea Grant has done rather well compared to other programs and I’m hopeful that we can continue down that path.

Mr. Faleomavaega asked: You referred to Sea Grant’s aquaculture research. Many countries are ahead of the U.S. in this area, can’t Sea Grant do more on this front?

–**Dr. Evans replied:** Sea Grant has already done a great deal of aquaculture research to date and other agencies within DOC are also getting involved, one is providing \$20 million in grants for aquaculture development. It’s also important to develop environmentally safe aquaculture—many countries who export aquaculture products don’t have environmentally safe aquaculture standards.

Mr. Pallone asked: I’m concerned about the lack of funding going to the New Jersey Sea Grant program, particularly with respect to its extension efforts--can you comment on that?

–**Dr. Evans replied:** One half of the federal funding that goes to a state program like New Jersey has to go to research activities, but the use of the rest of the federal funds is a state decision, not federal.

Mr. Underwood asked: Sixteen of the thirty Sea Grant colleges received “excellent” ratings after their programs were reviewed—for those that did not, were there any problems that were common to all, such as being part of a consortium? Anything we could fix legislatively?

–**Dr. Evans replied:** The evaluation process was created by the last reauthorization. The Sea Grant Review Panel (the entity that reviews each program for effectiveness) did not find a common problem with the programs that would benefit from a legislative fix.

Mr. Gilchrest asked: What are your priorities for Sea Grant’s oyster research?

–Dr. Evans replied: Sea Grant has pursued oyster disease research for 10 years and has had some successes to point to, i.e. disease resistant oysters developed through genetics. Creating more disease resistant oysters is important to rebuild the fishery and to play a role in ecosystem restoration. An Oyster Summit is planned for next year to examine past research efforts and chart a future course.

Mr. Underwood asked: Land Grant colleges are a lot older than the Sea Grant college system, how do we get the same kind of support for coastal concerns as there is for agricultural concerns?

–Evans replied: Sea Grant does a good job of getting the “message” out about coastal concerns through its education and outreach efforts. I think that many of the statistics about the importance of the coasts that we have cited today are becoming more widely known.

Mr. Faleomavaega asked: How does a university become a Sea Grant “college”?

–Dr. Evans replied: There are five specific criteria for the creation of a Sea Grant consortium—this has appeared in the Federal Register and I’d be happy to submit this information for the Record.